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27 June 1958MEMORANDUM FOR: Inspector GeneralSUBJECT : Report of Investigation of the Interim Assignment Section,
Personnel Assignment Branch, Office of Personnel *MD 177*1. Objective

To determine to what extent the assignment of "special category" Agency personnel to the Interim Assignment Section (pending termination of their employment with the Agency) adversely affects the operations of that Unit and its primary function of induction of new employees.

2. Scope

To accomplish the above objective a spot-check inspection and appraisal of the organization, functions and operations of IAS and the Personnel Assignment Branch (PAB) was accomplished by a visit to the premises and personal interviews with key personnel.

3. The Premises

On 13-14 June 1957, the IAS moved from Quarters Eye to its present location, 1016 16th Street, N.W., together with other sections of the Personnel Assignment Branch. The IAS occupies approximately the same floor space (8600 square feet), which they formerly occupied in Quarters Eye. This space is distributed on four floors of the 16th Street building. Due to its location and the fact that complete air conditioning is provided in every room, all concerned feel that the facilities are much improved. The top four floors are occupied by other elements of the Personnel Assignment Branch and OTR instructors.

4. Organization and Staffing

a. The entire T/O Staff of the Personnel Assignment Branch totals ten. Of this number, three are assigned to the IAS, and at the time of this inspection there was an immediate prospect of reducing this number to two, which would then comprise the Chief of Section, a GS-11, and an assistant, GS-7, to perform the multitudinous operational and administrative functions pertaining to processing between three to five hundred new employees per month during the peak of activity in July, August and September.

b. The ideal staffing for IAS should provide for a Chief, an Assistant, a Project Supervisor, a combined stenographic and file clerk, and two monitors to control and effectively supervise large groups of new employees on separate floors of the building.

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c. The two monitors and the stenographic help can readily be drawn from the experienced new employees. This is not entirely satisfactory due to the frequent turn-over involved, but is an acceptable and workable arrangement. For continuity and efficiency, however, it is essential that the permanent staff of IAS not be reduced below three.

c. In my opinion, it is imprudent to delete this Staff to the point of impotency. The Interim Assignment Section is the front door to the Agency, and should, in fact, be the show place in which none but the best qualified are assigned. It is here that lasting first impressions are made, and it is to the Agency's advantage that these impressions are good.

d. The normal confusion inherent to the induction of large numbers of new employees is magnified a thousand times when the Unit is forced to resort to make-shift measures in order to accomplish its mission--and they do accomplish it, due to the dynamic leadership and professional competence of at least two outstanding individuals with whom I talked during this investigation. Both parties are personable, efficient, enthusiastic, and cheerful. They like people and have a great sense of responsibility. Both have had long years of service with the Agency and with the Office of Personnel. I was favorably impressed with the high quality of OTR key personnel assigned as instructors.

4. Procedures

a. The flow of non-professional type (Grades 2 to 7), new employees in and out of IAS, is controlled by the Chief of the Assignment Branch. Factors affecting this flow are many and varied and include attrition losses, requirements, processing capacity, rejections, security and medical holds, and personnel ceilings.

b. In 1956 and 1957, approximately [redacted] of this category of personnel were recruited for the Agency each year. Some 400 failed to report for duty or declined to enter on duty, and the remaining [redacted] new employees were processed through the Interim Assignment Section. Of this number, records show that two-thirds of this category reported with full clearances and were processed as follows: 1st week, initial orientation, testing, and processing; 2nd and 3rd weeks, training and work on unclassified projects; 4th week, final orientation, interviewing, and assignment. 25X9A2

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c. Individuals reporting with provisional clearance remain in the 2nd and 3rd week stage of processing for extended periods. (In some instances as much as four months), before final clearance and assignment is accomplished. The average processing time is between sixty and ninety days.

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d. The obvious solution to this problem is not to bring the prospective employee on duty until he is fully cleared. However, practical experience has shown that recruitment of good prospects in this category cannot be accomplished in this manner. COMPETITION WITH industry and other Government agencies compels the Director of Personnel to bring these individuals on duty as soon as possible after recruitment, fully realizing that the average yearly losses during the processing period (after reporting for duty) is estimated at 200. Medical and security disqualifications, dissatisfaction with prolonged waiting periods for clearances and acceptance of other employment in the Washington area, or elsewhere, are contributing causes of resignations during this period. This total (200) combined with those who fail to report for duty (400) represents [redacted] of the recruitment effort for this category of personnel each year.

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5. Slotting and Work Loads

a. The IAS is authorized a monthly average of [redacted] slots for budgetary purposes. This figure is greatly exceeded during the peak processing periods of July, August and September, when the monthly average may exceed [redacted]. On occasions, this figure has reached as high as [redacted] in a single month.

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b. This condition is seasonal and unavoidable; however, it should be kept in mind by the Director of Personnel that key individuals associated with this activity never have the opportunity to take a summer vacation. A letter of appreciation or commendation at the close of this busy season, officially recognizing this devotion to duty, would boost morale enormously.

c. The Chief, Personnel Assignment Branch, and her assistants engage in all correspondence with the prospective employee prior to entrance on duty. This is a time-consuming task in itself. They also conduct personal interviews, make final determination of assignments, and cut actions in each case.

d. The Chief, Personnel Assignment Branch maintains personal contact with each unit of the Agency in regard to their requirements and to the availability of slots against which assignments can be made.

e. In the past, personnel ceilings have resulted in over-extension of waiting periods for assignment of fully cleared, new employees, and has resulted in dissatisfaction and lowering of morale. The introduction of the flexible T/O is expected to eliminate this condition.

6. Reception of New Employees

a. Upon reporting for duty, the new employee is given a room and desk assignment and introduced to others occupying the same area; assisted in finding accommodations; and instructed concerning normal duty hours; and on the use of the "sign-in/sign-out" register.

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b. This "sign-in/sign-out" register is checked each morning by the Assistant to the Chief, IAS, by 0900. If everyone is not accounted by 1000, inquiries are begun to determine the employees' whereabouts. Violations are few and far between. Telephone messages and appointment schedules are prepared by this office and handcarried to each individual concerned. There is one telephone on each floor for the employees' use. Records of a statistical nature are prepared by IAS. Detailed examination of these records was not made, however, a spot-check satisfied me that most were essential and were kept current. (See Tab A.)

c. It would be impossible to keep this activity running at its maximum efficiency with the authorized T/O Staff. There is ample justification for the utilization of new employees in on-the-job training, to meet day-to-day requirements of operation.

d. With minor exceptions, the intermingling of college graduates with high school graduates presents no problem. When a good college graduate displays initiative and ability and is willing to assume responsibility, she is quite pleased to be given the supervisory job over a group of new employees.

7. Special Category Employees

a. At the time of my inspection, there were seven "special category" personnel assigned to IAS. Three selection-out cases, one of which is a staff agent recently returned from overseas; one disciplinary case from OCR awaiting separation; two [redacted] personnel, who failed in their trial period of employment with the Agency; and one individual, who had been declared surplus and is awaiting assistance from the out-placement office of Personnel.

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b. These individuals are located in separate offices on the second floor and are completely out of contact with new employees.

c. According to the Assistant Chief of Section, IAS, instructions for accommodating this category of personnel come from [redacted] of the Office of Personnel, in the form of a telephone call stating that such-and-such a person is reporting to IAS for a specific period (which is often extended), and to keep them busy.

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d. The IAS, thereupon, assigns each individual to work on existing projects, which in most instances, involve scanning and screening newspapers and scientific journals for specific information requested by OCR and OSI. New employees reproduce this marked material as part of their training during the 2nd and 3rd weeks of processing. Records are maintained on the number of man-hours utilized in each project.

e. The value of the work performed by "special category" personnel during this period is questionable, but would likewise be questionable if the individual remained assigned for duty with his parent unit pending final determination in his case.

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f. The individual also utilizes this time in the preparation of his individual case. The IAS has no authority to restrict the individual's activities; it merely keeps a record of the individual's whereabouts during duty hours through the media of the "sign-in/sign-out" register. Actually, the IAS serves as a convenient holding detachment for the Director of Personnel to maintain these individuals in an official status pending outcome of personnel actions.

g. It is only within recent months that the facilities of IAS have been utilized by the Director of Personnel to absorb "special category" personnel, pending the outcome of personnel actions relating to their termination of Agency employment. The maximum space that can be assigned for this use without interference of processing of new employees during the peak load (July, August, September) is one large office which will accommodate fifteen persons. To date, nine is the maximum number of this type personnel held by IAS at any one time.

h. From a practical standpoint, there appear to be no complications arising out of the use of the IAS as a holding detachment, and official place of duty for "special category" personnel, provided the total number so assigned does not exceed fifteen at any one time during the months of July, August and September.

i. The physical transfer of selection-out cases to IAS does not in itself induce low morale. This condition is created at the time that head of the Career Service officially informs the individual that he has been recommended to the Director of Personnel for selection-out proceedings. The individual considers it less embarrassing to be in IAS than to remain in the area of his parent unit among colleagues who are aware of the situation.

j. At the same time, the taking away of the official badge is deeply resented for two reasons: (1) humiliation at being treated as an outsider and required to register and be accompanied by another employee during the many official visits required during the selection-out process; and (2) the inability to exert much personal effort to shop himself for possible assignment. This action is considered debasing and implants a feeling of indignation in the person who is fully cleared and has for many years been considered a trusted and acceptable Agency employee.

k. For the above reasons, I suggest that the practice of requiring selection-out personnel to forfeit their badge be discontinued. If the head of the Career Service wishes to restrain the individual from access to his former office and records, he is privileged to do so by issuing specific instructions in each case, pertinent to the areas of his responsibility only.

8. Conclusions

a. During peak operations (July, August, September) the Section T/O for PAB is inadequate to efficiently process the number of new employees involved.

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b. Within certain limits, the utilization of IAS facilities by the Director of Personnel for "special category" personnel is justified and does not interfere with normal IAS operations.

c. The morale of "special category" personnel is not adversely affected as a result of their assignment to IAS.

d. The withdrawal of the official badge is detrimental to the best interest of the Agency and to the individual concerned, and should not be accomplished prior to official action of the DCI or resignation of the individual, whichever action comes first.

9. Recommendations

I recommend (a) that the Director of Personnel issue the necessary instructions to the Deputy Directors to the effect that the badges of individuals being processed under the selection-out procedures will not be picked up prior to final DCI action or resignation, whichever action comes first; (b) that the Director of Personnel submit a monthly status report to the IG on each "special category" personnel in IAS at the close of each reporting period showing: name, grade, unit, EOD with IAS, and explanation in each case where the individual has been assigned to IAS in excess of 60 calendar days; (c) that the Director of Personnel study ways and means of extracting more productive work from "special category" personnel; (d) that the Director of Personnel augment the authorized T/O of PAB by twenty percent during the peak operational period of July, August and September; and (e) that the Director of Personnel be furnished a copy of this report for his information.

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Attachment
(Tab A)

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